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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Sovereign God, whom to know is life eternal, speak Your transforming words to us. Speak words of encouragement to lift us from pessimism. Speak words of strength to prepare us for temptation. Speak words of warning to keep us from evil. Speak words of comfort to heal our hurts. Speak words of guidance to lead us on the right path.

Speak words of power to our Senators today to equip them to meet challenges and to lift burdens. Remove from us everything that prevents us from hearing Your voice.

We pray in Your powerful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today we will be in a period of morning business in order for Senators to make statements. Yesterday we completed our work on the Tax Relief Act with a vote of 54 to 44. We had a good debate—a great debate—on the importance of this extended tax relief, this progrowth policy put forth by the President and supported by this body yesterday. We had a lot of Senators participate on both sides of that important debate of the direction of the country to continue this strong economic growth with the creation of over 5.3 million jobs in the last 30 or so months. I congratulate Chairman GRASSLEY for his tremendous work in helping bring that tax relief package to the floor which will ensure continued economic growth and job creation.

Yesterday, unfortunately, we missed an opportunity to assist small businesses across this Nation. We all know it is in those small businesses that we find the engine of economic growth and the creation of new jobs. We had an opportunity to assist them with lowering their health care costs by allowing them to group together, to band together to capture marketing clout, which would lower prices for health care for their employees. We were unsuccessful in that particular effort, although it is one that will come back again and again because the cost of health care is skyrocketing and is getting increasingly out of the reach of everyday working Americans.

I wish to thank Chairman ENZI, who has worked tirelessly on this bipartisan bill which would attempt to do just that and would have accomplished that if we had been able to pass it yesterday. Chairman ENZI has done a tremendous job in pulling people together and in educating people broadly on it. I thank him for his work.

As we stated yesterday, we will return on Monday to a very important bill, the importance of which is cap-

tured by the passion expressed across the country, whether it is on television or in newspapers, on talk shows or on the streets or at the workplace, and that is the immigration debate. As we all know, we need to tighten our borders and we need to focus on our borders. But we also need to approach the issue in a comprehensive way because we are a magnet attracting people across that border, and then people are hiring them illegally, so many employers are breaking the law. We need to tighten up there and address the temporary worker program, as well as the people who have come here illegally in the past.

As we talked about yesterday morning, we will have a robust debate, an open debate, and Senators will have ample opportunity to offer their amendments. But as the Democratic leader and I said on the floor 24 hours ago, it is important for people to bring their amendments right now to the leadership in language so we can start the process and so that process, with debate and amendment, is not pushed off for a few days but literally starts on Monday. We should consider several amendments on Monday and then begin voting on those on Tuesday. So I do encourage our colleagues to come forward.

On Tuesday morning, we have locked in a vote on a circuit court nomination that will begin around 10 o'clock in the morning, and I expect we will have votes on the immigration bill shortly thereafter. It is my hope that we will have votes over the course of Tuesday and, indeed, on each day next week. We may be working into the evenings because we will finish this bill prior to the Memorial Day recess.

With that, Mr. President, over the course of the day, I expect there will be a number of Senators coming down to make statements, reflecting on what has occurred over the past week and celebrating the great victory for the American people in the bill that passed

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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